

Understanding Historic Parks and Gardens in Buckinghamshire

The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Research & Recording Project



Photograph by Ros Hampton

Heatherden Hall

April 2016

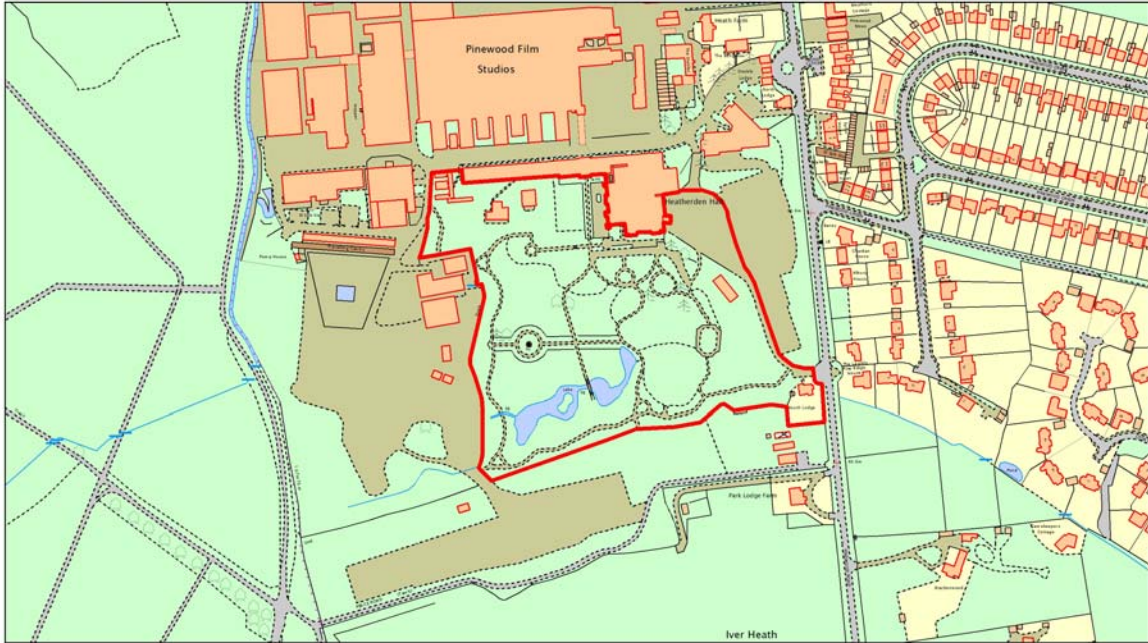


Bucks Gardens
Trust

THE
GARDENS
TRUST



HISTORIC SITE BOUNDARY



Heatherden Hall: boundary of historic designed landscape interest
Produced by the County Archaeological Service
February 2016



Scale: 1:3,373 at A4

This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of the Queen's Stationery Office. Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction offences apply. Copyright and any other rights reserved and protected.



Bucks Gardens Trust



Heatherden Hall: 2011 aerial photograph

© Getmapping plc. www.getmapping.com

Produced by the County Archaeological Service
February 2016



Scale: 1:2,706 at A4



Bucks Gardens Trust



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Project

This site dossier has been prepared as part of The Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust (BGT) Research and Recording Project, begun in 2014. This site is one of several hundred designed landscapes county-wide identified by Bucks County Council (BCC) in 1998 (including Milton Keynes District) as potentially retaining evidence of historic interest, as part of the Historic Parks and Gardens Register Review project carried out for English Heritage (BCC Report No. 508). The list is not conclusive and further parks and gardens may be identified as research continues or further information comes to light.

Content

BGT has taken the Register Review list as a sound basis from which to select sites for appraisal as part of its Research and Recording Project for designed landscapes in the historic county of Bucks (pre-1974 boundaries). For each site a dossier is prepared by volunteers trained on behalf of BGT by experts in appraising designed landscapes who have worked extensively for English Heritage on its Register Upgrade Project.

Each dossier includes the following for the site:

- A site boundary mapped on the current Ordnance Survey to indicate the extent of the main part of the surviving designed landscape, also a current aerial photograph.
- A statement of historic significance based on the four Interests outlined in the National Policy Planning Framework and including an overview.
- A written description, derived from documentary research and a site visit, based on the format of the English Heritage *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2nd edn.
- A map showing principal views and features.

The area within the site boundary represents the significant coherent remains of the designed landscape. It does not necessarily include all surviving elements of the historical landscape design, which may be fragmented. It takes no account of current ownership.

NOTE: Sites are not open to the public unless advertised elsewhere.

Supporters and Acknowledgements

The project was supported by The Gardens Trust (formerly the Association of Gardens Trusts and the Garden History Society) and funded by BGT with significant grants from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust and the Finnis Scott Foundation. BCC generously provided current and historic mapping and access to the Historic Environment Record.

The Trust would like to thank the volunteers and owners who have participated in this project and given so much time and effort to complete this challenging and rewarding task.

Further information is available from: www.bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

COUNTY:	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	HEATHERDEN HALL BCC HER 0638101000
DISTRICT:	SOUTH BUCKS	
PARISH:	IVER	
OS REF:	TQ 01 84	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

The complex formal and informal gardens for a mid-late C19 villa which was substantially enlarged in the early C20 when the gardens were re-designed with the addition of a lake, fountain and grotto by the notable landscape firm James Pulham & Sons. The house and gardens were retained as the core of the renowned Pinewood Film Studios, which opened in 1936 as a country club and for film locations. The garden retains much of the historic character and detailed layout established by the 1930s including hedges, sculpture, mature ornamental trees and other planting.

Archaeological interest

The Pinewood Studios site, including Heatherden Hall and gardens is part of an archaeological notification area for Buckinghamshire County Council. The Archaeology Data Service states that the potential for archaeological finds is low to moderate, due to the level of development in the area. The potential exists particularly for lost garden features.

Architectural interest

Charles Reeks (1821/2-1908) a local architect designed the house c1865, which between 1914-1928 was re-modelled and greatly enlarged by architect C. M. Seth-Ward (1868-1946). Some architectural features were acquired from other properties, e.g. the Boardroom panelling was designed by architect Harold Peto in 1907 for the Cunard Liner ‘The Mauritania’. The house became the focus of the studios after 1936 but was surrounded to the north and west by studio buildings of considerable scale. South Lodge and gateway are important as part of the late C19 architectural ensemble and as the only surviving one of the three former entrances to the country house.

Artistic interest

The late C19 villa gardens were remodelled in their present complex form with both formal and informal features in the early C20 by the notable landscape firm James Pulham & Sons, who were active c1865 - c1939 (Hitching). They constructed a rock garden, grotto, lake, balustrades, urns and sphinxes, featuring their trademark cement Pulhamite rockwork. It is a good surviving example of their work. Much of the layout established by the 1930s and the detailed planting survives including mature trees, clipped yew hedges, herbaceous borders and seasonal bedding.

Historic interest

Lt. Col. W Grant Morden, a Canadian businessman and MP (Brentford & Chiswick 1918 – 1929) owned Heatherden between 1914 -1932 when its secluded location yet proximity to London attracted eminent politicians and businessmen. The agreement to form the Irish Free State took place here in 1921. Since Pinewood Studios opened in 1936, it has become the largest film studio in

Europe. House and gardens have featured in numerous films, notably *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and various *Carry Ons*. The *James Bond*, *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, TV and light entertainment shows are also filmed at Pinewood.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

By c1766-8 the area of Iver Heath east of Black Park and west of 'The Clump' (a notable circular group of trees) evidently had a few buildings and a road in a north-south direction (Jefferys). Heatherden Hall was subsequently built in this area. By c1821 (Bryant), the road appeared to be re-aligned parallel and closer to the buildings. In 1846 (Tithe Map), properties included Manor Farm, Birches and Park Lodge with parcels of land. These were present in 1860 (A Map of the Proposed District of Iver Heath). The adjacent road was known as Fulmer Road (Pinewood Road in 2016).

Heatherden Hall was built c.1865 (Historic England) with an extensive garden laid to lawns with trees and shrubs screening the site boundaries (OS 1870). North of the house were orchards, a walled kitchen garden, greenhouses and service yards. The Census of 1881 and 1901 show continuous residence by the same family. In 1901, Dr Drury-Lavin, his wife and 8-year old son had seven household servants plus a gardener and gamekeeper. Heatherden Lodge, the coachman's residence, and a gardener's cottage are recorded. Dr Drury-Lavin died in November 1902, leaving an estate of some £80,000.00. Although Heatherden Hall remained in the ownership of Mrs Lavin until 1913 (1910 Valuation Book of Iver, *Slough Directory*, 1912-3), it was rented in 1910, the House comprising 8 acres, value £200.00 and the land 23 acres, value £26.10s (1910 Valuation Book of Iver).

In 1914, Heatherden was acquired by Lt. Col. W. Grant Morden, a Canadian financier (*Slough Directory*). At the outbreak of World War I Grant Morden offered Heatherden Hall as a convalescent home for wounded Canadian soldiers (*Slough, Eton and Windsor Observer*, 19 September 1914). By the 1920s (OS) major changes to the house and garden had taken place under Grant Morden's ownership. He engaged architect C.M. Seth-Ward to extend the house and James Pulham & Sons to re-design the garden (Hitching), including planting of shrubs, hedges, topiary and trees. The layout introduced formal elements: yew hedge enclosures and avenues, juxtaposed with a new serpentine-edged lake and winding paths.

Grant Morden was an influential figure: a businessman, MP, JP, Master of Foxhounds, and his shooting parties at Heatherden featured in *The Tatler* (1922). The agreement to form the Irish Free State took place here in 1921; a commemorative plaque was subsequently installed in the house - and the southern boundary road named 'Peace Road' (extant). In a reversal of fortune however, following the Wall Street Crash of 1929, Grant Morden was declared bankrupt in 1930. The era of lavish reconstruction of house and garden had come to an end.

Shortly before the Heatherden estate was sold, British Pathé Films released a short black and white silent film featuring the gardens of Heatherden Hall, entitled *A Stately Home of England* (British Pathé, September 1931). It features three young women - Grant Morden had three daughters and one son - strolling in the gardens with their dogs, boating on the lake, 'shaking hands' with a topiarised teddy bear and bathing in the indoor pool. A herd of deer ran through the grounds and the film briefly included shots of the manicured gardens and exterior of the house with its columns,

balustrades and terrace. Grant Morden's bankruptcy preceded his early death in 1932, less than a year after the film's release.

The 1934 auction catalogue for the estate described its extent as 158 acres (64ha, Goddard & Smith sales catalogue). The estate was auctioned in 1934 and purchased for £25,000 by Charles Boot, of builders Henry Boot & Sons. In partnership with J. Arthur Rank and others, Boot created Pinewood Studios on the estate north of the house (the name referencing Hollywood, California, and also the surrounding pine woods), which officially opened on 30 September 1936 (Pinewood). Importantly, the house and gardens were retained as a film location and country club. During WWII the Crown Film unit occupied Pinewood.

21 years after Pinewood studios opened, in 1957, a commemorative article in *The Guardian* newspaper noted little change to the gardens 'with their paved walks, yews and 10,000 rose bushes, cover 16 acres ... one thing Charles Boot did insist upon was that trees should be planted to conceal these buildings (the studio blocks) from the road and to soften their concrete skyline'.

The house and garden with its lawns, lake and terraces remain a film location as well as functioning as bar, restaurant and terrace for studio staff and guests, with occasional use as a wedding and corporate events venue (2016).

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The 5 ha. garden is located within the southern half of the extensive Pinewood Studios site, in Iver Heath, south-east Buckinghamshire. It is about 18 miles west of Hyde Park, London.

Pinewood Studios backlots (the North, Orchard and Paddock lots) north, south and west of the site total c.9ha. After World War II, the Studios began to encroach upon the 1.6 ha. area now known as the Paddock Lot, to the south-west of the Hall. It was formerly a garden lawn with few trees in the 1870-1950s (OS). From 1966 (aerial photographs) when Pinewood's Paddock Water Tank was installed, the area of lawn became hard paving, with a car park to the southern boundary (2015 aerial photograph).

The eastern boundary is defined by Pinewood Road, from which the site is entered. The north and west boundaries abut the offices and backlots. Beyond the backlots west of the site is the woodland and heath of Black Park Country Park. The southern boundary is defined by Peace Road, a track. The boundaries are security-fenced with gated entrances.

The site is largely level and sits within an area of predominantly flat, sandy heathland with pine woods, birch trees and rhododendron.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main approach to Heatherden Hall is through the main security entrance to Pinewood Studios, from Pinewood Road, giving access to the north side of the forecourt below the east, entrance front of the house.

The main surviving historic entrance to the site is at South Lodge, some 180m south-east of Heatherden Hall. This marks a gateway from Pinewood Road to the former south-east drive to the house and forecourt below the east front. This single-storey late C19 brick building in Tudor style has gables, a slate roof and brick chimneys. The adjacent gateway is disused, but from here the drive leads north-east, surfaced in tarmac and enclosed within an avenue of mature trees, and is screened from both gardens and Pinewood Road with trees and shrubs on either side. In the late C19 (OS), this was one of three entrance drives, each with a lodge. The former eastern and northern entrance roads linked to yards and kitchen garden.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING

Heatherden Hall stands at the northern boundary of the site, adjacent to the offices and studios to the north. The two-storey rendered country house was designed and built c.1865 by a local architect, Charles Reeks. In the early C20 it was substantially extended by architect C.M. Seth-Ward to its present form.

Since 1936 when Pinewood Studios opened, the house and gardens have been retained as a Country Club for staff and guests - and as film locations. The principal ground floor rooms connect to the gardens by French windows on the south and west facing terraces, with the entrance front to the east. The terraces and balustrades are ascribed to James Pulham & Sons and feature in the firm's 1925 *Garden Ornament Catalogue* (Hitching).

The grand oak-panelled Ballroom opens onto a west-facing terrace linking the gardens. The ballroom is notable for its raised stage, chandeliers and panelled doors interconnecting to the Pools Theatre. This was a luxurious indoor Swimming Pool and Turkish Bath in the 1920s-30s (Pathé, 1931) but is now covered.

GARDENS

The ornamental gardens to the south and west of Heatherden Hall comprise formal and informal lawns, lake, avenues and mature planting, much of which survives from the 1920s layout by Pulham and Sons (OS), and is embellished with numerous garden ornaments, urns, sphinxes and statues.

The gardens are described in a clockwise direction from the south front of the house. All paths are gravel. From the south-west corner of the house, linking the terrace and gardens, a curved stone staircase decorated with balustrades and urns descends six steps to a 6m wide path. This runs parallel to the south terrace. A mature Cedar of Lebanon is sited to the west of the steps, partially overhanging the terrace.

Aligned with the steps, a path runs in a north-south direction, bisecting a semi-circular lawn, (25m radius) some 20m from the terrace. It continues southwards to a small circular lawn with a central

stone feature. This path joins the semi-circular perimeter path enclosed by mature evergreen shrubs and trees.

To the east of the path parallel to the south terrace and linking with the semi-circular path, another path to the south defines a circular area of rose bushes and then connects with the perimeter path. Lawns, with mature specimen trees (Cedar of Lebanon, Oaks, Wellingtonia, Birch, Holly) are on the eastern side of the path.

This path continues southward to a rectangular enclosure of formally clipped yew hedges (with crenelated tops) which appears like a fortification on the lawn. It is c.27m long x 21m wide, and sited about 75m south-east of the south terrace. Clipped arches in the yew hedges form entrances to the north and south. Within is a low parterre of lavender compartmentalised into four sections by a low narrow box hedge with a central stone statue of a Greek goddess. A path surrounds the parterre and two stone benches in classical style are placed to east and west between the entrances. The path exits south to the spacious informal lawns with mature planting on either side.

The path continues south and near the south boundary it divides. To the east it leads to the car park, Lodge and Pinewood Road. Leading westwards, the path continues through planting which opens to reveal the focal garden feature: the lake and fountain. The serpentine-edged lake is aligned east-west, c.110m south of the south terrace. It is c.85m long x c.28m wide at the widest part, but the width varies. In the eastern section of the lake is a jet fountain (see cover photograph) designed and built by the stone modelling and landscaping firm of James Pulham & Son (Hitching). Their proprietary cement known as Pulhamite, motto: 'Durability Guaranteed', simulated natural rock in colour and texture. It was used to line the lake, in the construction of the fountain, the ornate stone bridge with its balustrading and urns, a grotto designed to conceal a rowing boat, a rockery and pathway leading to a small sunbathing patio (over the grotto) and steps down to the lake for swimming. The lake is stocked with fish, and contains an island with mature trees and shrubs. Formerly, c1930, photographs show that adjacent to the bridge, a balustraded wall with terrace and steps led down to the lake, giving the appearance of a swimming pool with formal edges, all now gone (2016).

Elsewhere in the gardens Pulhamite cement was used to construct various (extant) garden ornaments, urns, sphinxes and statues designed in the classical style.

The perimeter path continues westwards parallel to the lake and site boundary through a grove of pine trees. Near the western boundary with the studios, it turns north. Roughly half-way along this path, on the eastern side, is a semi-circular stone seat terminating an east-west avenue, c.110m long, which is enclosed by formally clipped high yew hedges and flanked by herbaceous borders.

The yew avenue continues to a circular lawn (c.17m diameter) in which there are parterres, in a radiating pattern, of herbaceous plants and shrubs centred upon a stone pond and fountain. To the east, the avenue is bisected by a cross avenue running north-south. To the south it continues about 30m to join the bridge over the lake. To the north the cross avenue leads through lawns with mature trees and shrubs and then turns north-east to join a wide path parallel to the house and south terrace.

The perimeter path marks the western boundary of the gardens; the backlots of Pinewood studios are screened by mature shrubbery and trees (as Charles Boot stipulated in the 1930s) and security fence. This path is bisected by the cross avenue and continues north. Where the path meets the northern boundary with Pinewood Studios' offices it turns east. Here it connects to a small, circular enclosure of high yew hedges. Within is a circular path, lawn (c.7m diameter) and central stone statue of a Greek goddess on a plinth. The path continues eastwards along an avenue for c.70m leading to the south terrace in front of the house. To the north of this avenue, and west of the house, are lawns.

Parallel to the terrace west of the house is a wide avenue, 55m long, running north-south, flanked by topiarised yew hedges.

The gardens contain various commemorative headstones and plaques dedicated to people associated with Pinewood Studios. On Pinewood Studios 70th anniversary (2006) a time capsule containing a filmography of the past 70 years was buried in the lawn (north of the east-west avenue).

REFERENCES

Pevsner, N., Williamson, E., *The Buildings of England: Buckinghamshire*, Yale, 1994, p.416

Hitching, C., *Rock Landscapes: The Pulham Legacy*, ch.29., Garden Art Press, 2012

Buckinghamshire Monument Full Report, *Gardens at Heatherden Hall*, 27.04.2015

Historic England, *Durability Guaranteed, Pulhamite rockwork – Its conservation and repair*, January 2008

Slough Directory, 1912, 1913, 1914

1910 Valuation Book of Iver, 12th July 1910, p.4

The Pinewood Story, Owen, G., and Burford, B., Richmond: Reynolds & Hearn, 2006

The Tatler, no.1071, 4th January 1922, p. 3

Burke's Peerage, 107th ed., Vol. 1., p.546

Web references

Slough, Eton and Windsor Observer, 19th September 1914, p.2

http://www.sloughhistoryonline.org.uk/asset_arena/image/original/sl/ol/sl-ol-slough_observer19091914163402-e-00-000.jpg

Probatesearch.service.gov.uk (Drury-Lavin, 1902)

<https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/Calendar?surname=lavin&yearOfDeath=1902&page=1#calendar>

(Grant Morden 1932) <https://probatesearch.service.gov.uk/Calendar#calendar>)

The London Gazette, 5 February 1931, issue 33796, p. 863

<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/33796/page/863>

Pinewood Studios website:

<http://www.pinewoodgroup.com/our-studios/uk/about-us/heritage>

<http://www.pinewoodgroup.com/our-studios/uk/pinewood-studios/backlots>

Film

British Pathé films, video, <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/a-stately-home-of-england>
September 1931

Maps

1766-8 Jefferys map of Bucks

1811 draft 2" Ordnance Surveyor's Drawing (BL)

1824 Bryant map of Bucks

1846 Tithe Map of Iver Heath (CBS)

1860 A Map of the Proposed District of Iver Heath (CBS)

Ordnance Survey 1870s, 1880s, 1900, 1920s, 1950s, 1970-80s

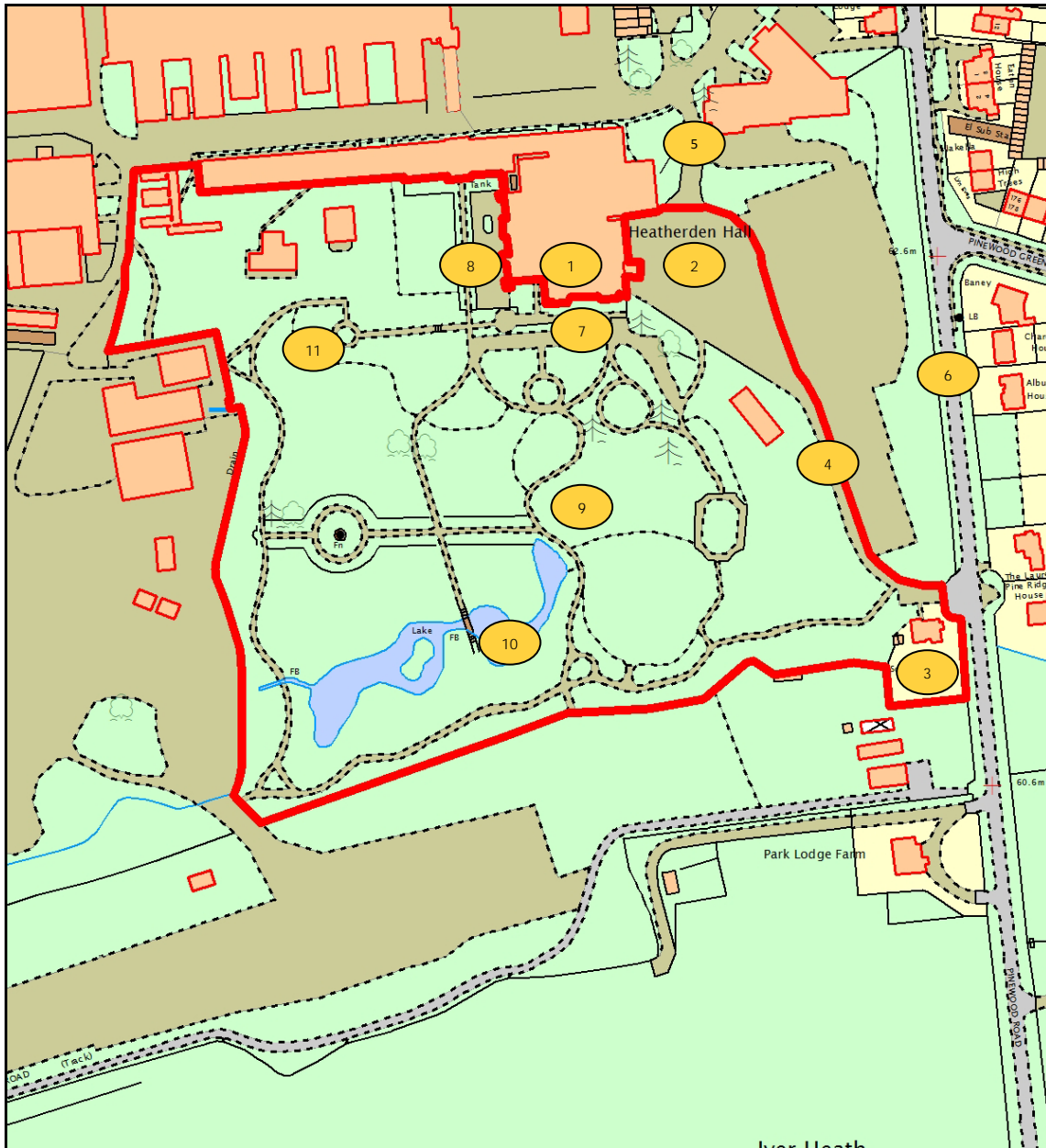
Aerial Photographs

1945 RAF, 1947 RAF, 1955 RAF aerial photographs

1966, 1974, 1979, 1985, 1989, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2010 aerial photographs

Author: Ros Hampton (November 2015/January 2016); edited SR February 2016

KEY FEATURES



Key to numbered features

1. House	2. Forecourt
3. South Lodge & gateway (disused)	4. South drive
5. Northern approach from studios	6. Pinewood Road
7. South terrace	8. West terrace
9. South garden	10. Lake
11. West garden	

IMAGES OF KEY FEATURES

All photographs by Ros Hampton.



South front and terrace (left); Topiary walk west of house, view towards Admin Block (right)



Cedar and south terrace (left); Statue in circular hedged lawn (right)



Entrance to topiary enclosure (left); topiary enclosure, view north (right)



Lake & grotto (left); grotto with path and terrace (right)



East-west axis and circular fountain